

{06/25/07} — West Chester, PA — On Monday, June 25, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07), a member of the Subcommittee on Health, Regulations, and Trade and the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions, held a Health Care Summit at West Chester University which brought together diverse interests to discuss the problems and successes of our healthcare system. The summit provided an opportunity for medical professionals, hospitals, consumer advocates, nurses, union and workforce leaders, businesses and the public from across the district to address the challenges facing our health care system, including the accessibility, affordability, and quality of our health care system.

“This summit was organized with one simple goal in mind – to provide us with as much quality and useable information as possible, so we can begin to address the challenges facing our health care system,” noted Congressman Sestak. “We all have ideas on ways we can improve access and the quality of healthcare. By working together, we can come up with solutions that will eventually ensure everyone has access to medical care.”

Today’s summit, through a series of interactive panel discussions, explored ways to. The panelists noted that. The event (see enclosed agenda) consisted of four panels consisting of local experts on these areas, including:

- 1) Providing Accessible Health Care
- 2) Providing Affordable Health Care
- 3) Covering the Uninsured; and
- 4) Providing Quality Health Care

“Throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, health care costs are rising at exponential rates. We are facing critical shortages in health care workers, and the number of uninsured is increasing. These are not signs of a stable health care system,” added Congressman Sestak. “My goal in holding this summit was to bring together leaders in the health care industry, the business and labor sectors and consumer advocates to find solutions and opportunities that work.”

Congressman Sestak will be turning the discussion from today’s Summit into a report that will highlight the findings and include suggested action items, including legislation, that Joe can pursue in Congress. The intent of these summits is to find solutions that work. Indeed, Congressman Sestak did just that in an earlier health care summit he held with Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) on mental health parity. Based on the summit’s discussion, Congressman Sestak successfully passed two amendments to H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. The

first amendment highlights the fact that mental health care is an essential component to the medical services offered to our Veterans and the members of our Armed Services by clarifying that ‘medical care’ as defined in H.R. 1538 includes mental health care services. The second amendment requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members. In addition, it requires the Secretary to submit to Congress within 180 days a plan for establishing a Peer-Reviewed research program within the Defense Health Program’s research and development function to research the prevention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and how to best strengthen the psychological resiliency of our military service members. Both amendments passed with unanimous support.

He was also successful in taking ideas out of his three-part series of Education Summits, and turning them into legislative solutions. During the panel discussion on early childhood education, Congressman Sestak’s panelists and guests discussed the need to address three issues pertaining to Head Start: continued support of parental involvement in local Head Start policy councils; extending eligibility of Head Start for families up to 130 percent of the poverty level, ways to recruit retain head start teachers, including loan forgiveness. As a result of this discussion, Congressman Sestak worked with Chairman Miller to incorporate parental involvement in local Head Start policy councils and to extend the eligibility of Head Start families into H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start Act. Joe also successfully offered an amendment during the Head Start Reauthorization bill to provide loan forgiveness (up to \$17,500) for Head Start teachers, the same currently offered to math, science, and special education teachers.

And he recently passed an amendment based on ideas generated from his Economic Summits that benefit small businesses. Congressman Sestak’s amendment was successfully included in the Small Business Fairness in Contracting Act, and will ensure small businesses greater access to federal government contracting opportunities. Over the past five years, the federal government has increased the use of a practice known as “contract bundling,” which allows federal agencies to consolidate purchases into mega-contracts — contracts so large they cannot possibly be performed by a small company. As a result, significantly fewer small businesses are receiving federal government contracts. Joe’s amendment ensures that more large contracts will be reviewed as to their appropriateness to be bundled, and potentially broken into smaller pieces more suitable for small business. He also successfully passed legislation – H.R. 2359, the SBA Entrepreneurial Development Programs Act – which enhances two, critical Small Business Administration (SBA) Entrepreneurial Development programs: Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and the Service Corps for Retired Executives (SCORE) based on ideas discussed during his summits.

In Congress, Congressman Sestak has been working to improve the quality and accessibility of our healthcare system. As a member of the Education and Labor Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, which has jurisdiction over employee health benefits, as

well as the Small Business Subcommittee on Regulations, Healthcare and Trade, the Congressman has been working to make healthcare more affordable for small businesses. In addition, he helped expand funding for embryonic stem cell research by cosponsoring and voting for the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 3), and he introduced the Conquer Childhood Cancer Act (H.R. 1553), along with Congresswoman Deborah Pryce (R-OH), to encourage and expand support for biomedical research programs for childhood cancer and to establish a population-based childhood cancer database. Congressman Sestak also pushed for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with drug manufacturers to obtain more affordable medication prices for Medicare beneficiaries by cosponsoring and voting for H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Direct Negotiation Act.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*

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Health Care Summit

Location: Student Union

West Chester University

Event Description: The Health Care Summit will including the Public, CEOs of area hospitals, medical professionals, consumer advocates, business leaders, union leaders, and insurance companies – from across our District and region to create a forum where we can start a dialogue together to address the health care challenges facing our nation today. Topics to be discussed include how to improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of our health care system and how to cover the uninsured.

Agenda

8:00 – 9:00 Registration

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome from Congressman Joe Sestak

9:10 – 10:10 Providing Accessible Health Care

Moderator: The Honorable Joe Sestak, Member of Congress

- Dr. Stephen Foreman, Associate Vice President
- Jack Holefelder, President, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce
- Dr. Walter Tsou

10:10 – 11:20 Providing Affordable Health Care

Moderator: The Honorable Joe Sestak, Member of Congress

- Joseph Frick, President, Independence Blue Cross
- Dr. H.L. Perry Pepper, President, Chester County Hospital
- Joan Richards, CEO, Crozer-Keystone Health System

11:20 – 11:50 Break

11:50 – 1:00 Covering the Uninsured

Moderator: The Honorable Joe Sestak, Member of Congress

- David Edman, Risk Management Partners, LLC
- Chuck Pennacchio, Executive Director, HELP Fund PA
- Shelly Yanoff, Director, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth

1:00 – 2:00 Providing Adequate/Quality Health Care

Moderator: The Honorable Joe Sestak, Member of Congress

- Patti Eakin, PA State Nurses Association
- Dr. Stephen Harlin, Surgeon & Medical Director, The Wound Clinic
- Anne Morrissey, President, PA Managed Care, Keystone Mercy Health Plan

2:00: Adjournment